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RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE 0605
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE 0405
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TRIPOLI 000088

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SUBJECT: TFCD01: LIBYAN LEADER TO CONTINUE PERSONAL EFFORTS TO
RESOLVE CHAD CRISIS

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CLASSIFIED BY: Chris Stevens, CDA, Embassy Tripoli, Dept of
State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, backed by an informal mandate from AU leaders, plans to continue a round of personal diplomacy with both the Chadian government and rebel groups, possibly including an emergency meeting in the coming days. Libya is in contact with France to evacuate Libyan diplomatic personnel and dependents from Ndjamena. The GOL recognizes that the latest violence could complicate peacekeeping deployments to both Chad and Sudan; however, Libya has no objections to the peacekeeping deployment and favors a quick resolution to the latest hostilities. Though Libya strongly supports Chadian President Idriss Deby, Qadhafi has an apparently sincere, if egotistical, interest in seriously working towards a renewed ceasefire. End summary.

SECURITY SITUATION "VERY SERIOUS"

¶2. (C) Echoing February 2 press comments by MFA Secretary for African Affairs Ali Treiki, Salam al-Riyani, Treiki's chief of staff, told Poloff on February 3 that the GOL believes the situation in Chad is "very serious." The GOL estimates approximately 300 vehicles carrying 2,000-3,000 armed rebels are in Ndjamena on February 3. Libya believes Chadian President Deby is holed up in a heavily-fortified presidential palace. Al-Riyani speculated that rebels are receiving vehicles across Chad's borders with Sudan, CAR, and Niger, but he categorically denied that any elements in Libya were supporting the rebels. On Sudan's role in the latest violence, al-Riyani conceded the rebels' support "had to come from somewhere."

LIBYAN LEADER TO CONTINUE "PERSONAL" DIPLOMACY

¶3. (SBU) According to al-Riyani, the African Union, meeting in Addis Ababa, had asked Libya and the Republic of Congo to take the lead on AU efforts to resolve the current crisis. Pressed about Libya's mandate, al-Riyani said that the AU did not actually vote or officially nominate Libya to act on its behalf; rather, Libya's leadership role on the Chadian crisis emerged after a series of "informal consultations" of AU leaders on the margins of the Addis Ababa summit.

¶4. (C) Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi spoke with both President Deby and United Front for Democratic Change (UFDC) leader and

former Chadian diplomat Mohammad Nouri on February 2 to urge implementation of a Libya-backed ceasefire signed in October 2007.

According to al-Riyani, despite some press reports to the contrary, not all rebel factions had agreed to an immediate ceasefire. Qadhafi, back in Tripoli on February 3, plans to continue his "personal" diplomacy with the Chadian government and rebel groups through a series of telephone calls. Al-Riyani also raised the prospect that Qadhafi could call an emergency meeting on the crisis, either in Libya or elsewhere, in the coming days.

LIBYA TO EVACUATE DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL FROM NDJAMENA

¶5. (C) Al-Riyani told Poloff that Libya is currently working with France to evacuate 74 diplomatic staff and dependents attached to the Libyan Embassy in Ndjama to Libreville, hopefully on February 3. Al-Riyani noted that both the Libyan and French Embassies in Ndjama are located close to the Presidential Palace, the scene of the heaviest fighting.

VIOLENCE COULD COMPLICATE PEACEKEEPING DEPLOYMENTS

¶6. (C) Al-Riyani conceded that the latest violence could complicate peacekeeping deployments to both Chad and Darfur and complicate on-going international efforts to bring about a political solution to the Darfur crisis. However, he doubted that Sudan orchestrated the Chadian crisis to obstruct deployment of a European peacekeeping force. Noting Libya's long-standing position that foreign troops in Africa invariably "complicate" things, al-Riyani said that, since the Government of Chad decided to accept the peacekeeping force, Libya had dropped all objections.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) Consistent with Qadhafi's self-image as an African peacekeeper, Libya devoted considerable energy to an October 2007 cease-fire between the Chadian government and rebel

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factions; consequently, renewed fighting has embarrassed Libya and called into question Qadhafi's ability to mediate. Though firmly in Deby's camp, Qadhafi has a clear if egotistical interest in quelling the latest violence. (Note: GOL interlocutors periodically remind us that Deby is president thanks largely to Libya's multi-faceted "intervention" in the Chadian civil war. End note.) Libya also clearly recognizes that internal violence in Chad will complicate relations between Ndjama and Khartoum, which, in Libya's assessment, will have negative repercussions for UN/AU-led mediation efforts on the Darfur crisis. End comment.

STEVENS